

Reflecting
on the 26th Sunday in Ordinary Time



Archdiocese of
Liverpool

Prepare to be attentive to *The God Who Speaks in this story.*



- Light a candle or tea light if possible.
- Perhaps place a flower from the garden or a plant next to the light.

Let us begin our time of prayer for the Twenty Sixth Sunday in Ordinary Time:

Breathe deeply and allow yourself to become still.

Let the music help you to relax. Ask for God's grace and light to fill your heart and your mind as you open to the Word.



From heaven you came helpless babe
Entered our world, your glory veiled
Not to be served but to serve
And give Your life that we might live

*This is our God, The Servant King
He calls us now to follow Him
To bring our lives as a daily offering
Of worship to The Servant King*

There in the garden of tears
My heavy load he chose to bear
His heart with sorrow was torn
'Yet not My will but Yours,' He said

*This is our God, The Servant King
He calls us now to follow Him
To bring our lives as a daily offering
Of worship to The Servant King*

Come see His hands and His feet
The scars that speak of sacrifice
Hands that flung stars into space
To cruel nails surrendered

*This is our God, The Servant King
He calls us now to follow Him
To bring our lives as a daily offering
Of worship to The Servant King*

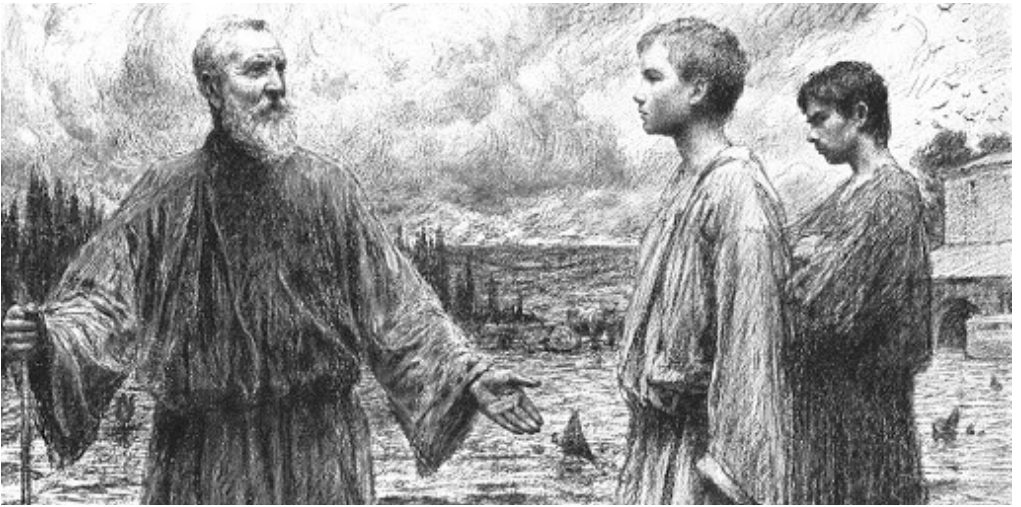
So, let us learn how to serve
And in our lives enthrone Him
Each other's needs to prefer
For it is Christ we're serving

*This is our God, The Servant King
He calls us now to follow Him
To bring our lives as a daily offering
Of worship to The Servant King*



Spend some time just looking at the three images.

- Where is your eye drawn to?
- What feelings are you experiencing?
- What are you noticing?



Pray the Responsorial Psalm for today.



Remember your mercy, Lord.

Lord, make me know your ways.
Lord, teach me your paths.
Make me walk in truth and teach me.

Remember your mercy, Lord.

You are my saving God
And your mercy lasts
In your love remember me, Lord.

Remember your mercy, Lord.

You show the path to all
who have gone astray,
guide the humble home to you, Lord.

Remember your mercy, Lord.

**Now, either read slowly to yourself this story
from the Gospel according to Matthew or better
still, read it aloud, again slowly.**

From the Gospel according to Matthew 21:28-32



Jesus said to the chief priests and the elders of the people, 'What do you think? A man had two sons; he went to the first and said, "Son, go and work in the vineyard today." He answered, "I will not"; but later he changed his mind and went. The father went to the second and said the same; and he answered, "I go, sir"; but he did not go. Which of the two did the will of his father?' They said, 'The first.' Jesus said to them, 'Truly I tell you, the tax-collectors and the prostitutes are going

into the kingdom of God ahead of you. For John came to you in the way of righteousness and you did not believe him, but the tax-collectors and the prostitutes believed him; and even after you saw it, you did not change your minds and believe him.

The Gospel of the Lord.

Spend a few moments allowing some aspect of the Gospel – a word/phrase or image – to touch you more deeply and read this part a second time, aloud if possible.

The reflection on the Gospel is provided by Ged Edwards who is CAFOD's Community Participation Officer working in Liverpool.



In this Sunday's Gospel we find Jesus again in conflict with the religious authorities, the scribes and pharisees. They had defined how people were acceptable to God which is of course helpful. The trouble was that many people in Israel could never fit the bill. These were the people the authorities called "the sinners" and "the poor". So, because they were excluded from mainstream society, it was these people who had left it, and flocked to John the Baptist in the River Jordan. Through John, they found their dignity. They discovered that God loved and wanted them to behave as his children. But when John challenged the authorities on this they had him killed. Jesus knew all of this first-hand. He had also travelled the road from Nazareth to see John at the Jordan. When he got there he met people, the poor and sinners of course in huge numbers. And he realised the truth that the people excluded by the authorities were just normal people, but people who had been treated badly by the system and for whom within it there was no hope.

The great theologian Albert Nolan in his book *Jesus Before Christianity* writes that you can tell what sort of person someone is by the decisions they make. John and his disciples stayed at the Jordan baptising people but Jesus chose a different path. He went back into society to try and bring it together. I like to think that he did this because he had seen that people were prevented from being together, lied to and falsely separated, often through no fault of their own. And yet, all the time that God loved them and the whole of Israel, not just the few. He saw just how much of a mistake this separation was. Jesus had found his mission. This is what is behind this meeting for Jesus in the Gospel today and his repeating John's question, "What do you think?" When they reply, he points out the simple facts: that even those they despised most have actually bypassed the system and found themselves as members of God's family. They had listened to John and found a way to God, simply by admitting their errors, seeking forgiveness and doing what God wants them to do. Meanwhile, the scribes and pharisees say they will follow God, but they don't. So, they are actually excluding themselves from God and his Kingdom, and preventing people from being with God, depriving them of even their dignity.

So, to us, today. This story builds on the Gospel story last week about the labourers in the vineyard which reminded us that our lives are about doing our bit in the work of building the Kingdom. This means getting up every day and playing our part when we are called to. We are in the period called Creation Time when Pope Francis has asked us to reflect on the gift of the earth, and yet how its people and creatures, in all their beauty and mistakes are so often mistreated by economic and religious systems, with all their winners and losers. And we remind ourselves that Jesus'

mission, our mission, is that, as St John reminds us, “they might have life and have it to the full.” Sometimes we say we will do the right thing, to help God build the Kingdom, and then make no plans to do it. Or perhaps today, like the second son, like the tax collectors and prostitutes, like those who have changed their minds because they see differently, we get stuck in too? We can make choices which mean we “hear the cry of the Earth and the cry of the poor,” as Pope Francis puts it in *Laudato Si’*. So, will you use the car when you could walk? Do we support CAFOD’s appeals and campaigns on climate change? Each of us has such choices today. Let’s pray for and encourage each other along the way. It will not be easy to make the radical changes that are needed. Like Jesus, we will be challenging the prevailing way of doing things if we build a different future. But, like the son who did not want to go to the vineyard, we can change. And we need one another - no-one can cultivate a vineyard alone. We can work together to make something better and be proud to share and to hand on to future generations. Let’s start back today!

Take a few moments to receive and reflect on this poem by Jesuit poet Gerard Manley Hopkins which, although written in 1879, speaks to our focus on Creation Time.



Binsey Poplars

My aspens dear, whose airy cages quelled,
Quelled or quenched in leaves the leaping sun,
All felled, felled, are all felled;
 Of a fresh and following folded rank
 Not spared, not one
 That dandled a sandalled
 Shadow that swam or sank
On meadow and river and wind-wandering weed-
winding bank.

O if we but knew what we do
 When we delve or hew—
 Hack and rack the growing green!
 Since country is so tender
 To touch, her being so slender,
 That, like this sleek and seeing ball
 But a prick will make no eye at all,
 Where we, even where we mean
 To mend her we end her,
 When we hew or delve:
After-comers cannot guess the beauty been.
 Ten or twelve, only ten or twelve
 Strokes of havoc unselfe
 The sweet especial scene,
 Rural scene, a rural scene,
 Sweet especial rural scene.

As a result of your reflection, offer some prayers of intercession for the people and situations in our world today that seem to you to be most in need.

Let's begin with the prayer Archbishop Malcolm has asked us to pray at this time and then you may like to include one or more of prayers that follow and/or add your own:



God Our Father,
each person is precious to You.
You are the Giver of life.
Have mercy on us and protect us at this time,
as the coronavirus threatens health and life.
You are an ever-present Helper in time of trouble.
Watch over those who are suffering,
give strength to those who are aiding the sick
and give courage to all in this time of anxiety.
We ask this of you in the name of your Son.
Jesus Christ.
Amen.

The following prayers are provided for Creation Time by Ged Edwards of CAFOD.

We pray for the members of Pope Francis' team who are drawing up guidance to enable us to Prepare the Future. We ask for all the gifts of the Holy Spirit for them in their vital work, and for ourselves, that we will have the generosity to respond to the urgent crisis of climate change.

We pray for all those whose lives have been damaged by climate change. We pray for those who face hunger because of drought, flood, sea level rise and pollution. We pray for those who are forced to leave their traditional home because it is impossible to make a living there. We pray in sadness for the loss of the plants and animals made extinct by hunting and environmental devastation to meet the choices of others in the UK and the developed world.

We pray for all those who continue to suffer from the many effects of the COVID-19 pandemic:

- for those who have died and those who are bereaved,
- for those who have continuing ill health and those who care for them,
- and for all those who have lost their jobs or their homes as a consequence of measures to limit the damage of the infection.

We pray also for politicians and other public servants who work to mitigate the damage, and we pray that the community spirit provoked by the lockdown will continue and grow.

We pray now in the words Jesus gave us:

Our Father,
who art in heaven,
hallowed be thy name;
thy kingdom come,
thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven.
Give us this day our daily bread,
and forgive us our trespasses,
as we forgive those who trespass against us;
and lead us not into temptation,
but deliver us from evil.

To end your time of reflection, listen to *For the Beauty of the Earth*.



For the beauty of the earth
For the beauty of the skies
For the love which from our birth
Over and around us lies
Over and around us lies

*Lord of all, to Thee we raise
This our joyful hymn of praise*

For the beauty of each hour
Of the day and of the night
Hill and vale and tree and flow'r
Sun and Moon and stars of light
Sun and Moon and stars of light

*Lord of all, to Thee we raise
This our joyful hymn of praise*

For the joy of human love
Brother, sister, parent, child
Friends on earth and friends above
For all gentle thoughts and mild
For all gentle thoughts and mild

*Lord of all, to Thee we raise
This our joyful hymn of praise*

For each perfect gift of Thine
To our race so freely given
Graces human and divine
Flow'rs of earth and buds of heav'n
Flow'rs of earth and buds of heav'n

*Lord of all, to Thee we raise
This our joyful hymn of praise*

If you are concerned about the impacts of climate change and want to know more of the work of the Liverpool Archdiocesan Justice and Peace Commission on this topic, please visit the Commission's [website](#).

Acknowledgements

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Poem by Gerard Manley Hopkins, *Poems and Prose*, Penguin Classics, 1985.

For the Beauty of the Earth © John Rutter

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